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ABSTRACT

The Positive Education Program (PEP) in Cuyahoga, Ohio, incorporates a token economy and group process approach into the daily school routine for emotionally disturbed and behaviorally handicapped students. At elementary and secondary levels, minimum rules and expectations as well as privileges awarded for behaviors are clearly set forth. The level systems list responsibilities and rights designed to promote students' control over their own behavior and to establish an environment in which natural reinforcers will begin to maintain appropriate behavior. Contingency contracting in terms of individual weekly and/or monthly behavioral and academic goals is included. The level systems for secondary students are designed to decrease the need for extrinsic reinforcement and increase the response to social reinforcement. Classroom interaction meetings are used to solve social problems and help students classify their values. (CL)

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Affective Management Strategies for Behavior Disordered Students - Elementary and Secondary Levels

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Affective Management Strategies for Behavior Disordered Students - Elementary and Secondary Levels

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A major concern within the last decade has been the control and management of student behavior. This parental and professional concern has contributed to the development of special education classes specifically designed for emotionally disturbed and behaviorally handicapped students. Various individual and group management techniques have been developed to modify these students' behavior.

A behavior modification program that has been successful in northern Ohio is the Positive Education Program (Cuyahoga, Ohio). The basic concept of P.E.P. is to incorporate points, schedules, contracting, goal setting, and group process within a daily school routine. These components are part of an academic and behavioral level system in which student expectations are outlined. While each component can operate independently, the level system approach integrates all of the components to form an effective classroom management system.

At each level, minimum rules and expectations are clearly outlined as well as privileges that can be earned for establishing or maintaining behaviors. Because behaviors are specifically defined and discussed with each student, arguing and manipulation of rules are reduced. Students understand what is expected of them and are therefore aware of privileges for establishing a new behavior as well as consequences of rule breaking. Students also understand exactly what is expected of them in order to succeed in the program and phaseback to their home schools or alternative school setting (resource room, vocational school, etc.).

Personal responsibility and leadership skills are task analyzed and sequenced within the level system approach. Student behaviors are scrutinized to determine antecedents and appropriate solutions to problems. Once appropriate problem solving skills are learned the phaseback process can begin. The students have acquired self confidence in themselves and their ability to overcome their problems through appropriate means.

The level system concept has four basic premises: 1) students entering a special education program for behaviorally handicapped students have little or no control over their inappropriate behavior, 2) students can learn how to control their behavior, 3) through incentives and positive peer and adult interaction, students will choose to behave appropriately more often, and 4) when an appropriate behavior is firmly established, natural reinforcers will begin to maintain it.

Time schedules and token economies in the form of points, stars, popcorn kernels, etc., provide the basis of reinforcement in the level system. When a student enters the program it is assumed that he/she cannot delay gratification for long periods of time and would respond best on a short, fixed ratio schedule of reinforcement. Points and stars are awarded when the student has performed an appropriate behavior. When the student is reinforced immediately it increases the chances of the behavior being exhibited again. Points accumulate and are totaled on a daily and weekly basis to determine progress in moving up the levels.

Contingency contracting is incorporated into the level system for three purposes: 1) to allow for individual differences in behavior acquisition, 2) to earn a specific privilege, and 3) to earn a trial phaseback either at home school, vocational school, or alternate special education program. Once a student has progressed to the highest level, contingency contracting may last as long as six to eight weeks.

Individual weekly and/or monthly behavioral goals are also a part of the level system and acquisition of these goals can earn participation in a goal activity (bowling, skating, lunch out), extra free time, or a class field trip. Points earned for achieving these goals are also accumulated and help earn higher levels of responsibilities and privileges. At the highest levels the student must accomplish their behavioral goals in order to remain at that level.

Academically, students must complete individual and class assignments in order to earn points for level acquisition. The quantity of assignments and passing criteria increases at each level. Assignments are individualized to the skill level of each particular student to insure that the work required is not above his/her performance level. When the highest level is earned, academic tasks are completed at a level that would be acceptable at his/her home school.

Level Systems for Elementary Age Groups

The level system in an elementary classroom must list responsibilities that are within the developmental range of the majority of the class. These responsibilities should include: 1) completion of academic work (quality and quantity to be individualized as needed), 2) minimum points to be

earned in order for the day to count towards level movement, 3) participation in class, group meetings, 4) achievement level of weekly/monthly goal, and 5) a statement regarding compliance with class rules. Responsibilities should be written as simply as possible and discussed with students the first day. A sample of class rules and level system for elementary age students follows.

Class Rules

	If Rule Is Broken...
1) Have permission to leave classroom or school grounds	...1-3 days Off Trust
2) No fighting	...3 days Off Trust
3) No swearing	...1-3 days Off Trust
4) Treat all property with respect	...1-3 days Off Trust
5) Complete assignments at your level	...Off Trust until work is done

Level System

Off Trust

Responsibilities	Rights
1) work at desk	1) eat lunch in room
2) earn days back to your level	
3) do not break any class rule	

Level 1

Responsibilities	Rights
1) finish 6/10 assignments	1) 1 freetime (snack/story)
2) earn 65 points	2) lunch recess
3) participate in class meetings	3) buying time (1 item)
4) no more than 2 "Hassle" Time-Outs	4) group activities at school

Level 2

Responsibilities	Rights
1) finish 8/10 assignments	1) all rights from Level 1
2) earn 75 points	2) 10 min. freetime at desk
3) participate in class meetings	3) 1 soda pop
4) 1 "Hassle" Time-Out	4) buying time (2 items)
5) earn at least 5 bonus points	5) field trips
6) meet weekly goal for 3 days	

Level 3

Responsibilities	Rights
1) finish 9/10 assignments	1) all rights from Level 1 & 2
2) earn 85 points	2) 10 min. freetime in room
3) participate in group meetings	3) buying time (all items)
4) no "Hassle" Time-Outs	4) table games
5) earn bus points and 5 bonus points	
6) meet weekly goal 4 days	

Level 4

Responsibilities	Rights
1) finish all assignments	1) all rights from Level 1,2,3
2) must meet goal 5 days	2) no escort to restroom or pop machine
3) earn 90 points	3) can earn "early out"
4) earn bus points and 10 bonus points	4) unlimited buying in store
5) no "Hassle" Time-Outs	5) phaseback contract
6) may lead group meeting	
7) meet weekly goal 5 days	
8) meet conditions of individual contract	

Level Systems for Secondary Age Students

When working with adolescents as well as young children the purpose of the level system is to: 1) increase expectations for appropriate behavior, 2) decrease the need for extrinsic school reinforcement, and 3) increase response to social reinforcement. It is important that adolescents are involved in the design and implementation of the level system from the onset. They need to be a part of this group process in order to establish some control over their own life. The more input these students have in the management process the stronger their commitment to the success of the program.

Class meetings are held daily at the beginning of the school year to decide responsibilities and privileges at each level; theme of the level system; and the number of daily and bonus points necessary to move up levels. A sample of a secondary level system follows.

Class Rules

	If Rule Is Broken...
1) respect other people's property	...1-2 days at pit level
2) refrain from aggressive behavior	...2 days at pit level
3) refrain from abusive language in common areas	...loss of daily and bonus points/2 days at pit level
4) be prepared for academic periods	...loss of daily/bonus points
5) no contraband items allowed at school or in your possession	...2 days at pit level and/or 1-2 day suspension
6) remain in assigned area at all times	...loss of daily/bonus points or 1-2 days at pit level

Level System

Pit Level

Responsibilities

1) do all work
2) remain in assigned area during class and lunch time
3) follow all class rules
4) earn at least 50 daily points and 5 bonus points to erase that day

Privileges

1) lunch in room at desk
2) bathroom break with permission
3) in order to obtain further privileges, you must display behavior showing that you can handle responsibility

Level 1 170 Daily Points; 10 Bonus Points

Responsibilities

1-4) all previous level responsibilities
5) raise hand to speak during academic periods
6) get permission to leave room

Privileges

1) break after work period
2) eat lunch with group in assigned area
3) buy 1 soda per day during break
4) attend field trips

Level 2 500 Daily Points; 160 Bonus Points

Responsibilities

1-6) at Level 1
7) return all work and games to proper area
8) make corrections on work where noted
9) return soda bottle to proper area

Privileges

1) all Level 1 privileges
2) soda at any break

Level 3 1000 Daily Points; 220 Bonus Points

Responsibilities	Privileges
1-9) at Level 2	1) all previous privileges
10) pick up assignment folders in morning and start assignments	2) soda bought during break can be consumed during lesson period
11) keep desk and work areas neat and orderly	3) use hand raising at your discretion
	4) work with someone else at your level on one daily assignment

Level 4 2000 Daily Points; 350 Bonus Points

Responsibilities	Privileges
1-11) at Level 3	1) all previous privileges
12) assist teacher during group meetings	2) sodas may be bought at start of any class period
13) maintain previous personal behavioral goals	3) obtain sodas for rest of class
14) maintain your own behavior point chart	4) class and school guide for visitors

The goal of Level 4 is to maintain the behavior and responsibilities achieved through the level system, personal goals, and contracts, and to begin generalization of skills to different situations. All reinforcers that do not occur in the student's home school are withdrawn in order to determine if behavior maintenance has been achieved. Feedback is provided daily through a checklist or schedule which evaluates performance on academic and behavioral skills. This checklist/schedule is also used during the transition-phaseback period along with the contingency contract.

When using any behavior modification system it is important to problem solve situations that arise by using classroom interaction meetings. There are five basic purposes for these sessions: 1) development of thinking skills, 2) development of maturity, 3) improvement of classroom atmosphere, 4) development of positive self concept, and 5) communication skill development.

Open ended meetings are most commonly used. These meetings are designed to develop and increase thinking skills and to encourage students to relate knowledge to the topic discussed. Personal value clarification if often the major topic of these meetings.

Social problem solving meetings attempt to solve the individual and group problems of the class. Discussion is directed by the teacher or student leader toward solving the problem not outlining punishment or

blame. The leader's job is to reflect the opinions of the group and to summarize them. Although social problem meetings often deal with a specific behavior problem of an individual or group other topics may include friendship, vocational choice, or work interests. One topic should be discussed per meeting so that the group has a single direction of focus.

Affective education of behavior disordered students is necessary if they are to survive as productive members of society. Teachers need an affective program which provides them with the tools to teach these behaviors in a systematic manner. The level system approach combined with classroom meetings and contingency contracting meets the needs of students as well as teachers.